

Guide for Presenters at the Annual NEDSI Meeting

Thank you for your involvement in the Annual Meeting of the Northeast Decision Sciences Institute. This year's conference offers an excellent selection of papers, but there is more to a successful meeting than good papers: your presentation is critical. To help you prepare a presentation that matches the high quality of your paper and to make the best use of the 20 minutes you'll have to present a paper in a regular session, we offer these guidelines.

Prepare Early

Putting together a good presentation takes time. Don't wait until just before the conference to prepare. Draft your presentation a few weeks before the meeting, then set it aside and come back to it. What initially seemed like a clear, logical presentation may look quite different upon a later look.

Prioritize Topics

Determine which topics in your presentation are most important. Keep your audience in mind as you prioritize topics. Ask yourself what they are most likely to be interested in and what they already know. In most cases, you can assume some degree of audience familiarity with your problem and/or the relevant literature.

Share Your Insights

Remember, you've spent more time working with your data or problem – analyzing, interpreting, and understanding it – than your audience. Share your insights and conclusions with your audience. Don't simply present data or summarized results, forcing your audience to draw its own conclusions.

Use Appropriate Visual Aids

Most Annual Meeting presenters use overhead slides to reinforce and clarify their presentations. Here are a few tips for creating effective slides:

- Use 18-point or larger printed fonts. Avoid handwritten slides.
- Limit the number of slides you use. A good rule of thumb is to allow at least one or two minutes per slide. If you go beyond 15 slides, you may overwhelm your audience.
- Limit the information on a slide to three to five points.
- A picture (that is, a good one) is worth a thousand words. A well-designed diagram or chart will make your point more quickly and clearly than words.
- Avoid visual clutter. Fancy graphics can distract your audience and diminish the slide's impact.
- Have a good reason for showing every slide. If your slides are properly prepared, they will provide the visual clues that will help you to keep your presentation on track.

Practice Your Presentation

Practicing your presentation enables you to manage your time more effectively and to be sure you've sequenced the material appropriately for the audience. You may want to present to your colleagues before the conference to get their feedback in time to make changes before the conference.